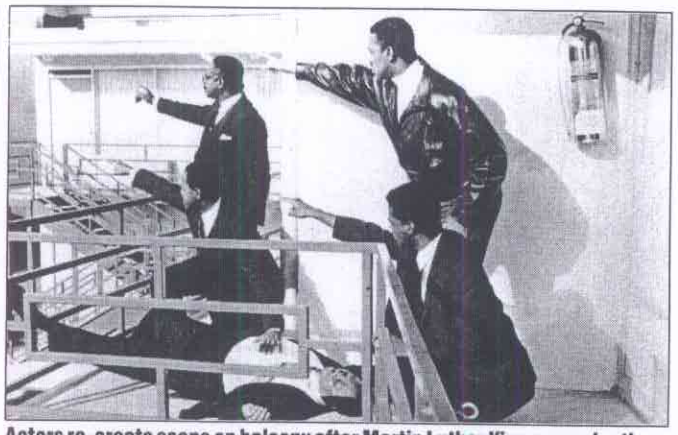

Actors re-create scene on balcony after Martin Luther King assassination.

Who Killed Martin Luther King?

(Fri. (22), 9-10 p.m., FBC)

Filmed in Memphis by STF Prods. Inc., a unit of Fox Television Stations Inc. Executive producer, Lance Heflin; producer, Phillip Lerman; associate producer, Burke Stone; re-enactment producer, Layne Batt; camera, Sheila Smith; editor, Dave Shapiro; sound, Nick Grenier, Phil Arnold; music, Charlie Barnett.

Host: Larry Fishburne.

Cast: Ralph Joseph, Ray A. Curry, R. Michael Cunningham, Benjamin Greene Jr., Gordon Ginsberg, Sara Van Horn, David E. Johnson Sr., Jamie Mann, Sascha Milligan, Morgan Murrell, Janie Paris, James Rasberry, Michael Richey, James Standback, Gregory Michael Siggers, Spencer Thomas.

Choir director: Jesse Williams

Soloist: Nita DeShazior

Did James Earl Ray kill Martin Luther King or was he the patsy of a larger conspiracy? Why was the rifle he allegedly used never tested to verify that it had ever been fired? If the Warren Commission could trace a barely visible piece of shrapnel to implicate Lee Harvey Oswald in JFK's assassination, why couldn't the same thing be done with a whole bullet in the King investigation? Did J. Edgar Hoover despise King enough to perpetrate a murder plot? Why was the probe cut short and Ray denied a trial? These and other questions provide the substance for this insightful documentary.

April 4 will be the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and most of these questions remain a mystery, leaving a pall of serious doubt clinging to the tragedy. Actor Larry Fishburne hosts this re-examination of the circumstances leading to and immediately following King's death. Fishburne's quiet dignity and forceful presentation of the evidence reveals the material in an empirical manner: objective, not exploitive.

Interviews with many of the key players, directly or indirectly involved with the event, provide a retrospect of intense acumen and often poignant remembrance.

Jesse Jackson, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, activist/author Dick Gregory, Ray's former attorney and assassination theorist Mark Lane, author Harold Weisberg, former Memphis prosecutor Phil Canale and former Congressman Walter Fauntroy, who headed the House investigation, speak to the issue.

While Clark and Canale stick to the FBI's official opinion that Ray acted alone and gunned King down with one perfectly fired, "pristine" bullet, their wealth of evidence is highly circumstantial.

The evidence that would have been used to build a case was never thoroughly examined because Ray was never tried, but the state's potential key witness, Charles

Stevens, the only person to identify and thereby link Ray to the scene of the crime, was reportedly drunk to the point of incoherence at the time of the shooting.

The documentary's most startling and moving segment has Stevens' common-law wife, Grace Walden, recounting the incidents that contradict her husband's testimony. Her testimony was never followed through as she was locked up in an asylum for 10 years the summer after the assassination. She claims to have been put away because she would not lie, while the records state her institutionalization was for "severe depression."

Spec contains stills and actual footage of King and the events, as well as a re-enactment of the shooting. Particularly interesting are the interviews with Ray, who still maintains his innocence.

In light of the new interest in the Kennedy assassination, the King docu seems long overdue.

—Michael Frym